

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 12, 2004

Steven A. Williams  
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Director Williams

As Members of Congress representing Western States, we are writing to urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) not to list the greater sage grouse as "endangered" or "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). We believe that such a listing would be counterproductive to successful state and local sage grouse conservation efforts already underway.

According to many wildlife experts, the greater sage grouse population has declined over the past half century. In response, States, counties and local communities have launched an unprecedented array of conservation programs to reverse this trend.

These locally-led conservation efforts provide conservationists and wildlife managers with the most effective tools to preserve this species. As the North American Grouse Partnership put in its comments to the Service:

*"The multitude of planning and conservation measures being undertaken across the species range offer the greatest opportunity to stem declines and increase sage grouse populations and to reconnect fragmented habitats and populations. These measures include state fish and wildlife agencies' conservation planning efforts, state and federal supported local working groups, federal agencies' strategic planning efforts and conservation initiatives by private organizations and individuals."*

By contrast, a "threatened" or "endangered" listing under ESA could hinder these locally-led conservation efforts and discourage a wider range of stakeholders from continuing to engage in these efforts.

We recognize that there is a vital role for the Service and other federal agencies to play in sage grouse conservation. That is why we were pleased to learn that the Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are conversing closely on a range-wide sage grouse conservation strategy. Given that BLM manages more than 50 percent of sage grouse habitat, this is a critical effort that must succeed.



The greater sage grouse conservation effort is a perfect case study where cooperative conservation efforts are making a difference. Please allow state and local sage grouse conservation efforts to continue and not add this species to the Endangered species list.

Sincerely,

Jim Gibbons  
Chabon

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John Shadyg

Di. Cuf

Bob Bering

May Walden

Kloc/Hetzg

Stent Stankas

Jim Matheson

July 19

Jeff Flake

Greg Radwin

C. D. Smith

Steven Pearce

Mike Smith

Marilyn Musgrave

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Barbara Cullin

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Samy Bellberg

cc: Secretary Norton  
Assistant Secretary Manson  
Secretary Veneman  
Secretary Abraham  
Individual Western Governors  
Western Governors' Association